

# **Raft Island Right-of-Way Vegetation and Tree Management Plan**

October 13, 2010 (revised January, 2016)

## **Introduction**

With the advent of underground utilities executed on the Island sometime prior to 2000, cessation of power line right of way clearing and maintenance removed a general maintenance for our roadway's vegetation and tree growth. Since that time, the right of way for many of our road ways, paths and right-of-ways has been encroached to the point where the usable roadway allows for only single car access and prevents the access of oversize vehicles on some of our designated pathways. Driving, jogging, and strolling on our roadways in many areas is clearly unsafe due to the encroaching vegetation and tree growth. Drivers not familiar with the island turns and roadway intersections many times miss road signs due to obscured street signs and overgrown roadways. It is apparent that regular right of way vegetation / tree maintenance is necessary to prevent overgrowth. In many areas, designated paths have overgrown to such an extent that they are unknown to many and impassable to all.

The goal of the roadway vegetation and tree management plan is to preserve the natural beauty and environmental integrity of our right-of-way while providing an open road system for the safe passage of vehicles and pedestrians.

## **Right-of-Way and Road Surface Designation**

The roadway cleared right-of-way width varies from location to location depending on the surface of the road, shoulder drainage and vegetation / tree location near the roads edge. In general, for the island's maintained road system, the trees and vegetation within a few feet of the roadway are located within the right-of-way, need to be trimmed back to allow safe passage.

### **From Raft Island's COVENANTS, CONDITIONS, AND RESTRICTIONS:**

#### ***ARTICLE V: Maintenance and Utility Easements***

*(b) Renovation and repair of the walkway easements located along the following Lots:  
Lots 18, 20, 22, and 24; Lots 60, 62, 64, and 66; and Lots 94, 96, 98, and 100*

#### ***ARTICLE VI: Protective Covenants***

*(d) Set-backs and Sight Distances. No structure of any type, fence, wall, hedge or shrub planting may be placed or permitted to remain closer to the Raft Island roads than is permissible under the Pierce County Zoning Code and Building Ordinance, nor shall any structure, fence, wall, hedge or shrub planting be placed in such a manner that it obstructs sight lines along roads in a manner impermissible under Pierce County Code requirements regarding road approach distances and stopping distances.*

The road system for Raft Island, as per **COVENANTS, CONDITIONS, AND RESTRICTIONS ARTICLE VI: Protective Covenants**, paraphrased above should follow the current 2011 **Manual on Design Guidelines and Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction in Pierce County**.

This manual states: *“Roads that are to be operated and maintained by a private organization such as a homeowner’s association must be located in an easement or tract. The road right-of-way, easement, or tract width shall be determined by the roadway characteristics involved in the design.”*

*The minimum right-of-way, easement, or tract width for roads shall be as follows:*

<b>Arterials</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
<b>Major</b>	<b>90 feet</b>	<b>80 feet</b>
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>70 feet</b>	<b>70 feet</b>
<b>Collector</b>	<b>60 feet</b>	<b>60 feet</b>

<b>Local Road System</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
<b>Feeder</b>	<b>60 feet<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>60 feet<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>Minor</b>	<b>60 feet<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>60 feet<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>Cul-de-sac</b>	<b>60 feet<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>60 feet<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>Neighborhood Street</b>	<b>50 feet<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Access Lane</b>	<b>40 feet<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>n/a</b>

<sup>a</sup> A 50-foot-wide right-of-way, easement or tract may be used when all utilities are located underground.

<sup>b</sup> All utilities must be located underground.

Over the years the environment, vehicle use, construction and landscaping projects have altered the original width of our roads and road sides. Road drainage has filled with debris and vegetative growth encroached onto the roadway, in some cases preventing clear delineation of the road way, its shoulders and right-of-way. Where road surface and shoulders are not clearly visible, areas will be delineated within reasonable limits from where the road and shoulder areas are clearly visible.

As per the Raft Island Association Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions reference to the Pierce County code requirements, the width of the island’s road and right-of-way combined should be 50 feet. Since the island road ways are 12 to 16 feet in width that allows a potential 17 to 19 foot shoulder/drainage area.

### **Vegetation Management**

Vegetation and trees along roadways can pose a public nuisance and/or poses a risk to pedestrian or vehicular safety. Managing our right-of-way vegetation and trees reduce soil erosion, stabilize roadsides, and are aesthetically pleasing without compromising vehicle operations.

Many properties have vegetation, privacy hedges or other such plantings that are well maintained located at many different distances from the roadway, but within or near the right-of-way. It is important to have the right-of-ways along the shoulder of the roadway clear of

vegetation and debris to allow the safe passage of vehicles in both directions and allow proper drainage. This would include line of site of our street signs, proper clearance of existing overhead electrical lines, corner visibility, mail boxes and address signs.

If you are considering landscaping, the particular method(s) chosen should be based on a variety of factors to establish an easily maintainable, stable plant population that will not interfere with vehicles or pedestrians. Emphasis should be given to the control tactic that will address the vegetation problem in the most environmentally sound manner and in a way to minimize vegetation control in the long term. The method chosen for a given vegetation problem should attempt to achieve a long term, low maintenance vegetation management program, minimizing its impact on pedestrians and vehicle passage.

Roadway vegetation management involves mechanical methods (hand cutting, selective trimming and mowing). In some cases our right-of-way drainage has become filled with debris from neglect or inappropriately dumping of trimmings from other locations blocking or hindering roadway drainage and contaminating runoff. In some cases mowing or trimming cannot completely remove the problem debris requiring digging to remove the offensive debris or blockage. Areas which interfere with traffic, obscure signs, impede the flow of water or divert water from drainage structures are not considered maintained until the vegetation has been removed from these areas.

For those who do not currently maintain their adjoining road right-of-ways, these inadequately maintained areas will be trimmed during routine (typically annual) right-of-way vegetation clearing or as necessary to maintain safe conditions of our roadways and right-of-ways. Successful management of encroaching vegetation helps maintain our roadways and right-of-ways clear, allowing proper drainage, runoff and open space for safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians within our roadways.

### **Tree Management**

Tree management, is a necessary part of providing a well maintained road system. The removal of dead or hazardous trees and the pruning of young trees are important. Keeping the right-of-way clear and free of hazards allow for the safe passage of vehicles, including emergency vehicles and pedestrians.

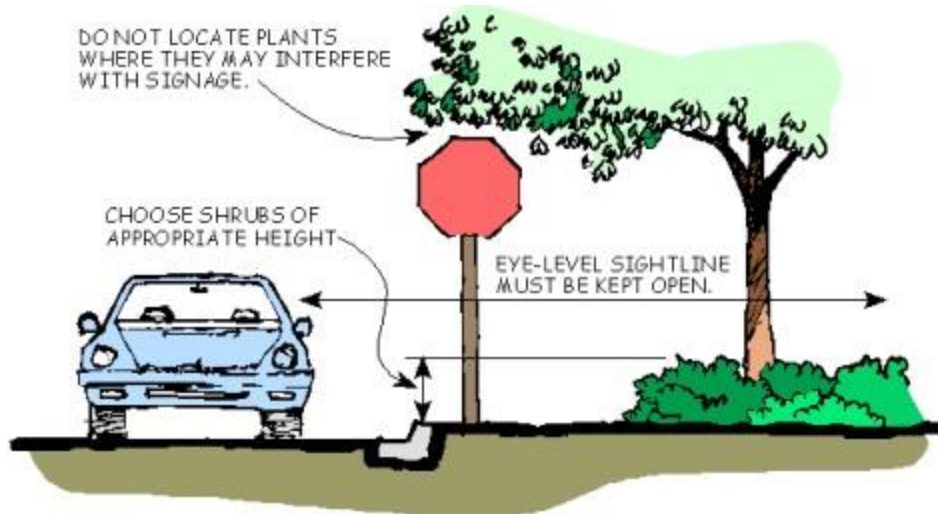
Trees should not be placed where their mature height or spread will interfere with utilities or encroach on travel lanes. Visibility of oncoming traffic is important to the safe travel of vehicles entering intersections. Visibility also applies to other safety features including road way corners, signs and driveways. The Raft Island Association will ask the property owners to remove overgrowth within their properties if they: block signs, prevent clear view of oncoming traffic at corners or large vehicle passage.

A hazard tree is defined as a tree that has structural defects in the roots, stem, or branches that may cause the tree or tree part to fail, where such failure may cause personal injury or property damage. These trees need to be removed before they cause bodily injury and prevent vehicle passage. Dead or trees posing risk to the roadway as assessed by a professional arborist will be asked to be removed or provide payment for the island to remove the offending tree. Trees that have fallen onto the road or clearly into the roads' right-of-way and not immediately removed will be removed by the Raft Island Association and the property owner where the existing tree is located billed for this service.

Due to personnel safety, no trimming will be performed on trees within safety zones surrounding existing overhead utility poles or lines, unless provided by the utility company. It is the property owner's responsibility for seeing that proper safety zones are maintained for their existing utility poles and lines. For further information regarding overhead utilities please contact your local utility provider.



Roadway tree management will involve mechanical methods (hand cutting, selective trimming and removal) and done in accordance with the International Society of Arboriculture guidelines, taking into account such factors as trees species and growth characteristics. Many property owners on Raft Island perform regular pruning helping in the efforts to keep our roadways safe. For those who do not maintain the adjacent right-of-ways including the overhead canopies, current management practice is necessary. This will include trimming trees at selected areas where they interfere with the road right-of-way usually during the island's routine vegetation trimming. This provides the necessary open space for safe movement of vehicles within our roadways. It would include line of site of our street signs, corner visibility, mail boxes and address signs.



*Maintain safe sight-distances.*

Street right-of-ways should have a vertical clear zone of 14 feet above the roadway to allow safe passage of vehicles including emergency vehicles. Due to the increasing number of trees needing pruning throughout Raft Island roadways, it is not always possible for the Raft Island Management to contact each individual property owner concerned about the trimming operations. If you notice branches from trees on your property overhanging into the clear zone of the Island's right-of-way, you may want to consider having these trees trimmed yourself or by an arborist of your choice, else they may be trimmed as noted.

### **Summary**

While certainly lack of maintenance has led to some of the vegetation problems, and the growing numbers of trees and vegetation have impacted our roads and right-of-ways, many improvements have been made by and continue to be made by many of the Island residences. Trees along roadways can pose a public nuisance and/or poses a risk to pedestrian or vehicular safety. Managing our right-of-way vegetation and trees reduce soil erosion, stabilize roadsides, and are aesthetically pleasing without compromising vehicle operations.

While we would all prefer it to be otherwise, the roadside is not a kind place for vegetation or trees and, quite frankly, we are fortunate to have so many trees that are in as good condition as they are. Still, we do strive for proper maintenance to see the overall health of our roadways and its right-of-ways improved.

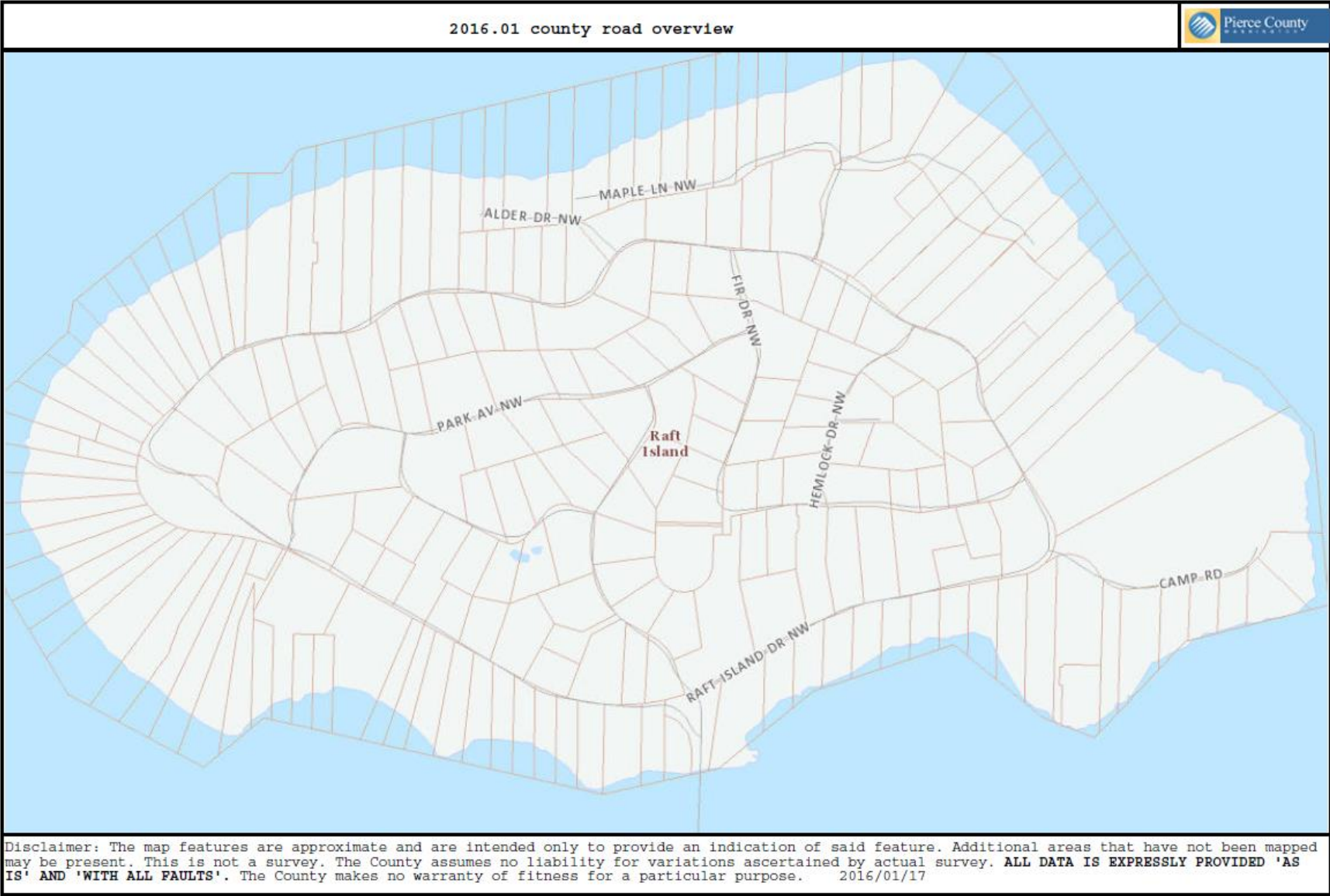
### **General Guide for Visual Impediments to Safe Road Use**

Raft Island Property owners and Island Management should not allow any of the following things to exist on or in the road right-of-way, including intersecting corners, that abuts property s/he owns or occupies, or on property that abuts a road, or in the airspace above a road, if the thing obstructs the view necessary for safe operation of motor vehicles upon the road, or if it causes potential danger to the public that uses the road:

- 1 Trees, 2 Shrubs, 3 Hedges, 4 Any vegetation, 5 Projecting overhanging limbs of vegetation, 6 Temporary or permanent structures, 7 Fences, 8 Berms, 9 Natural or man-made objects.

# Appendix

## Raft Island Terrain Map from Pierce County



# Appendix

## Raft Island Terrain Map from Pierce County



# Appendix

Raft Island Terrain Map adapted from Pierce County maps showing; roadways, drainage and building locations





